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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000741

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#) [HOSTAGES](#)

SUBJECT: IF ANOTHER HOSTAGE CRISIS COMES - FEST COMPOSITION

Classified By: Consul General Brian Browne for reasons 1.4 (c),(d), and

(e).

[11.](#) (U) This cable is an action request. See paragraphs 7 through 11.

[12.](#) (U) NOTE: This cable was drafted prior to the hostage-taking of 0330 hrs on 2 June 2006.

[13.](#) (C) Given the roiled conditions of the Niger Delta, another hostage situation is possible within the next few months. While President Obasanjo has launched a Delta stakeholders committee to consider the region's grievances, this activity may not be enough to stem the probability of a new round of militant activity against oil production.

A (MUCH-NEEDED) RADICAL DEPARTURE
UNLIKELY FOR THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

[14.](#) (C) To prevent another round of militant activity, the GON would have to take tangible action to ameliorate conditions in the Delta. The federal government historically has shown neither the political will nor administrative skill to implement these tasks. While Rivers State has launched a new development program with international oversight, and the Delta region states are making noises about increased accountability, they broadly lack the technical competency to administer large-scale development projects well. In short, neither the federal nor state governments are in a good position to move quickly enough to forestall additional militant action.

CONDITIONS IN THE OIL PATCH HAVE NOT CHANGED;
WORKERS STILL EXPOSED TO KIDNAPPING

[15.](#) (C) Meanwhile, thousands of oil workers, including Amcits, work in the Delta and are vulnerable to the threat of kidnapping. Oil service company workers are in the field more than major oil companies' direct hires, and are particularly vulnerable. Workers such as pipelayers and construction crews may work on the same site for months on end, their presence well-known to the local communities. Worldwide service contracts between the oil majors and their contractors often push oil service workers into the field unless under imminent threat. While the Nigerian oil industry operates now with extra caution, many workers remain fundamentally as exposed to the risk of kidnapping as before the two hostage-takings.

MISSION SUPPORTS RE-DEPLOYMENT OF FEST
IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER KIDNAPPING

[16.](#) (C/NF) We greatly appreciated the assistance the Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST) brought to bear in the successful resolution to the most recent hostage crisis.

SUGGESTED COMPOSITION OF THE FEST

[17.](#) (C/NF) Action Request: In the event of future kidnappings, Mission requests deployment of a FEST as configured below.

[18.](#) (C/NF) The February FEST's composition was appropriate. With two seasoned crisis negotiators in the lead, the FEST appropriately reflected friendly diplomatic relations between the GON and the USG, and deflected any suspicion that the team's intent was other than a supportive, non-military augmentation of Mission's personnel to manage a prolonged crisis. We would request the same leadership structure in the future, as this allowed the team leader to work policy

matters in Abuja, and the team deputy to be present in Lagos or in the affected state capital, monitoring what was happening on the ground, including the hostage negotiations.

19. (C/NF) The FEST, including FBI hostage negotiators, worked skillfully to broker a March meeting between GON federal negotiators and militant representatives. The meeting ultimately established the credibility of GON no-retaliation promises, and led to the hostages' release. The FBI negotiators' guidance in crafting public Mission statements and our interaction with the press was another key which unlocked the hostages' release. The FBI negotiators established credibility with the oil and oil service companies involved, encouraging them and the hostages' families to focus on positive actions supportive of the hostages' welfare and ultimate release. During a potential future hostage crisis Mission believes the Department of Justice contingent might be reduced to one negotiator and one forensics expert, especially if Justice can dedicate some personnel who will remain in the States but provide much-needed support to the agents who would travel to Nigeria.

10. (C/NF) The EUCOM analytical contingent proved invaluable in creating timelines, link diagrams, and analysis essential to our understanding of a complex series of events. Their analysis assisted our development of an appropriate and swift response. In the future, we would request EUCOM provide the same level of analyst support.

11. (S/NF) Mission can provide most of the communications support and equipment to the FEST team as needed. This will reduce the team requirement to whatever specialized communications gear they might need and that might not normally be found at post. Future teams should also travel without weapons. Requests for FEST to enter Nigeria with weapons risk misinterpretation of their advisory mission by the Nigerians and could significantly delay their arrival just when time may be of the essence.

BROWNE